**Bible Reflection 1**

**Prayer:** That we might hear from you Jesus and hearing respond with thankfulness and obedience

**Reading:**

Mar 6:30-44 The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. (31) Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest." (32) So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place. (33) But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. (34) When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things.

(35) By this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came to him. "This is a remote place," they said, "and it's already very late. (36) Send the people away so that they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat." (37) But he answered, "You give them something to eat." They said to him, "That would take more than half a year's wages! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?" (38) "How many loaves do you have?" he asked. "Go and see." When they found out, they said, "Five--and two fish." (39) Then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. (40) So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties. (41) Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to his disciples to distribute to the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. (42) They all ate and were satisfied, (43) and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish. (44) The number of the men who had eaten was five thousand.

**Introduction:**

We chose this Bible passage because it has been an inspiration in our lives and ministry over the last 24 years. We hope that the Holy Spirit will speak to you through it also during our time together.

Let us take you back to 1998. Apologies to those who might have heard some of this before. What was then our home church in Shipley Yorkshire had sent us in our vacation to check out a network of Nepali churches who wanted to partner with us. Up until 1995 I had been a pastor of an independent charismatic church in Surrey but in 1998 I was back working as a consultant civil engineer. Jane was working with CAP as a specialist debt adviser. During our visit to Nepal we expected to be meeting with leaders and believers, getting to know one another. Also we had a programme of meetings where we were expected to share and preach. But God did something entirely unexpected.

While walking the streets of the city we encountered poverty among both believers and the wider community. Although stirred by it we felt inadequate and overwhelmed and so walked away. But God had other ideas. I was travelling with our host pastor on the back of his motorcycle to visit a flood victim refugee camp where they had been giving out relief supplies. As we were bouncing along and singing worship songs together God clearly spoke into my mind. *(For me I tend to hear God’s voice more easily in worship times with others than I do in seclusion.)* This is what I felt God said **“My answer to poverty starts with what the poor have not with what they don’t have”** I responded **“I don’t understand – I thought the poor were poor because they didn’t have“ (***I believe God doesn’t have a problem with questions - for example have a look at Gideon’s first encounter with God in Judges 6)*. Back came the response with a question. **“Think about the feeding of the five thousand what did the miracle start with?”.** Light bulb moment! Five loaves and two fish! That conversation totally changed the direction of our lives and was the beginning of the 5000Plus ministry of economic empowerment for those trapped in poverty.

So let’s have a look at our passage of scripture.

To me the main focus of the story is not economic empowerment but Jesus working in his disciples lives:

**How much do we identify with the disciples?**

Their journey so far:

1. They are personally called and left everything behind to follow Jesus. They were full on with their commitment eg. Simon and Andrew, James and John Matt 4 – they left their boats, their nets, their families and followed him.

**Testimony - My coming to Christ, subsequent commitment & call to the mission field. Our marriage.**

2. Travelling with Jesus, being taught by him and witnessing the many miracles he was doing. And most recently being **commissioned** and sent out from him, in twos, to follow his example.

Mar 6:12-13 They went out and preached that people should repent. (13) They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.

In the passage – they had returned and told Jesus all about the miracles they seen. As he and the disciples were being peopled out so Jesus called a time out. They took a boat trip to find a quiet spot on the lakeside. But people followed them along the shore so that when they landed there was a large crowd.

**Compassion**

So we’re told that Jesus had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd and so he taught them. Jesus saw spiritual poverty and gave them the word of God.

The disciples saw a different sort of need – hunger – if you like physical poverty. They tried to give the responsibility to Jesus – Send the people away so they can buy food to eat. Jesus said - **You give them something to eat!**

**The word for compassion** means to literally to have the bowels yearn, to be moved with compassion.

We see from this story that compassion is linked to action. Compassion if it is to be more than an emotion must be linked to action or it’s just a useless emotion.

Joh 3:16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

When the bride of Christ which is the church, its leaders and its members, addresses both spiritual poverty and physical poverty with practical action it is very powerful. It can change whole communities and even nations.

**You give them something to eat!** That is a jaw dropping response, so challenging on so many levels, but it is also a response full of promise.

The disciples spoke from their view point, perhaps wanting to pass the responsibility to meet the needs to anyone but themselves. To Jesus – “**send the people awa**y”. To the people themselves – “**so they can buy themselves something to eat”.**

But Jesus spoke from the God view point, the kingdom of God view point - **you give them something to eat**.

So what was the reaction of the disciples to Jesus?

They said to him, "That would take more than half a year's wages! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?"

**Changing Mindsets** -This highlights how Jesus was working with his disciples to challenge and change their mindsets.

We see this reinforced in

Mar 8:17-21 Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked them: "Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not see or understand? Are your hearts hardened? (18) Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear? And don't you remember? (19) When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?" "Twelve," they replied. (20) "And when I broke the seven loaves for the four thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?" They answered, "Seven." (21) He said to them, "Do you still not understand?"

The disciples saw not an opportunity but a problem. Or as we paraphrase it in our 5000Plus training:

* They only saw what they didn’t have
* They only thought what they couldn’t do

Or to make it more personal to our lives

* We only see what we don’t have
* We only think what we can’t do

In 5000Plus we think our main challenge is also to see mindsets changed:

1. Our own. What began in Nepal is still ongoing.
2. The hearers of our income generation training.

Jesus wants us to see problems from a different perspective - as opportunities to prove God.

Life in a New Dimension CWR Selwyn Hughes ‘Turning setbacks into springboards’

*Jesus replied - “How many loaves do you have? Go and see.” When they found out, they said, "Five—and two fish." Mk 6:38*

**As we learn from this miracle the answer to the problem starts with what we have. However small or insignificant the resource may seem.**

**For Reflection and Discussion**

* Share your testimony of coming into a personal relationship with Jesus.
* What does your commitment to follow Jesus look like today?

Jn 12:24 ‘I tell you the truth, unless and ear of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.’

Rom 12:1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God--this is your true and proper worship.

2 Cor. 4:10-12 ‘We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus’ sake, so that His life may be revealed in our mortal body. So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you.’

* How does this story challenge your thinking, your mindset?

Prov 23:7. [NKJV] “For as a man thinks within himself so he is”

Rom 12:2 Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.

1 Peter 1:13 “Therefore prepare your minds for action, be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed.”